

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 IGA-02 EA-07 OMB-01

TRSE-00 /096 W

-----101420Z 019003 /53

P R 091315Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0044

INFO AMCONSUL CAP TOWN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY DARESSLAAM POUCH

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 1296

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS UK US SF BC

SUBJECT: BOTSWANA REQUEST FOR SECURITY ASSISTANCE; THIRD COUNTRY
INVOLVEMENT: THE UK AND COMMUNIST COUNTRIES

REF: GABORONE 1290

NOTE: THIS IS PART II OF A THREE-PART TELEGRAM ON BOTSWANA'S
REQUEST FOR SECURITY ASSISTANCE (REFTEL BEING PART I).

1. Q: HAS BOTSWANA TRIED TO GET MILITARY AID FROM THE UK
OR OTHER WESTERN SOURCES?

A: GOB HAS APPROACHED THE UK FOR ASSISTANCE IN TRAINING
AND ORGANIZATION, AND MAY BE EXPLORING LIMITED COMMERCIAL
SALES OPPORTUNITIES. WE ARE INFORMED (STATE 127960) THAT
MINISTER OF STATE ROWLANDS "REAFFIRMED THE INTEREST OF
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HMG IN PROVIDING BOTSWANA WITH MILITARY ASSISTANCE IN
FORM OF TRAINING, ORGANIZATION AND LIMITED COMMERCIAL
SALES". WHILE PRESIDENT KHAMA SEEMS TO WELCOME
THIS OFFER OF TRAINING AND ORGANIZATIONAL ASSISTANCE,
BDF COMMANDER MERAFHE WAS LESS FORTHCOMING AND
VIGOROUS THAN EXPECTED IN PURSUING UK ASSISTANCE DURING
HIS MAY VISIT THERE. BOTSWANA HAS NO EXPERIENCE WITH

OTHER WESTERN SUPPLIERS (AND VICE VERSA).

2. Q: HAVE PROBLEMS INVOLVED WITH EARLIER COMMERCIAL SALE OF ARMS AND AMMUNITION FROM UK FIRM TO BOTSWANA CAUSED BOTSWANA TO QUESTION UK CAPABILITY IN THIS AREA? (STATE 127690).

A: THERE IS NO DOUBT THE EARLIER UK DELAY HAS HAD AN INHIBITING EFFECT ON THE GOB. THE FORMER UK HICOM TOOK THE BRUNT OF GOB SUSPICIONS OVER THE PAST YEAR THAT DELAY WAS UK POLICY DECISION (CONCURRED IN BY U.S.). HOWEVER, THE UK'S PAST FAILURES HAVE NOT ELIMINATED IT FROM CONSIDERATION AS A POSSIBLE SOURCE OF SUPPLY. IT IS MORE LIKELY THAT GOB IS NOT PURSUING COMMERCIAL SALES FROM THE UK AS LONG AS IT BELIEVES CHANCE EXISTS FOR GRANTS OR AT LEAST CREDITS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES (I.E., THE US). IT SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED THAT THE GOB'S FAILURE THUS FAR TO REQUEST (OR EVEN DISCUSS) ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT FROM THE UK IS CLEARLY A CALCULATED POLICY. HOWEVER, WE HAVE KEPT THE UK HICOM HERE THOROUGHLY BRIEFED ON GOB REQUESTS TO U.S.

3. Q: WILL BOTSWANA TURN TO THE SOVIETS OR CHINESE FOR ADDITIONAL WEAPONS?

A: NOT AS A FIRST CHOICE. WE HAVE IT ON GOOD AUTHORITY THAT THE GOB IS LESS THAN SATISFIED WITH THE CHINESE WEAPONS IT ALREADY HAS. PHIL STEENKAMP (CONTRARY TO REMARKS BY MINISTER KWELAGOBÉ ABOUT NOT BEING ABLE TO AFFORD THE "LUXURY OF STANDARDIZATION") RECENTLY TOLD DCM "WE REALLY MUST STANDARDIZE." ALL THIS ASIDE, IF CONFIDENTIAL

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CREDITS ARE NOT A POSSIBILITY, THE GOB MAY AS A LAST RESORT TURN AGAIN TO THE PRC FOR GRANT EQUIPMENT, RATHER THAN PAY CASH OR SEEK CREDIT FOR COMMERCIAL PURCHASES. ACCEPTING ARMS FROM THE USSR IS LESS LIKELY; IT WOULD BE DONE ONLY WITH THE GREATEST RELUCTANCE BUT CANNOT (REPEAT NOT) BE EXCLUDED SINCE GOB DETERMINATION TO ACQUIRE ARMS IS BEYOND QUESTION. THIS IS BASED ON GOB CONVICTION THAT RHODESIANS NOW AND ZIMBABWEAN NATIONALISTS IN FUTURE POSE THREAT TO TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY THAT MAKES THEIR TOKEN FORCE NECESSARY.

4. Q: DOES PRESIDENT KHAMA PLAN TO DISCUSS SECURITY PROBLEMS WITH HMG DURING HIS PRIVATE VISIT TO LONDON?

A: UK HICOM TURNER SAID JUNE 7 THAT THE FCO HAS PLANS TO RAISE SECURITY PROBLEMS WITH PRESIDENT KHAMA DURING THE LATTER'S STAY IN LONDON. ONE OF THE REASONS IS THAT THE UK FOUND GENERAL MERAFHE COOL AND NOT VERY FORTHCOMING DURING HIS VISIT TO THE UK. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE UK IS CONCERNED ABOUT GOB RESERVES IN DISCUSSING

ITS SECURITY NEEDS WITH THE UK AND INTENDS TO MAKE ANOTHER
EFFORT, THIS TIME WITH PRES. KHAMA HIMSELF TO OPEN THE
DIALOGUE. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE GOB WILL
ACTIVELY PURSUE THE QUESTION OF ARMS FROM THE UK UNTIL IT
HAS RECEIVED A DEFINITIVE RESPONSE FROM US.
NORLAND

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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